



**State of Connecticut**  
**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
STATE CAPITOL  
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591

**REPRESENTATIVE MARY M. MUSHINSKY**  
EIGHTY-FIFTH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING, ROOM 4038  
HARTFORD, CT 06106-1591  
HOME: (203) 269-8378  
CAPITOL: (860) 240-8585  
TOLL FREE: 1-800-842-8267  
E-mail: Mary.Mushinsky@cga.ct.gov

**Chairwoman**  
PROGRAM REVIEW AND INVESTIGATIONS  
COMMITTEE

**MEMBER**  
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE  
FINANCE, REVENUE AND BONDING COMMITTEE

**Testimony of Rep. Mary Mushinsky (85<sup>th</sup>) in Support of: HB 6650, An Act Concerning  
Energy Efficiency Programs**

Before the Commerce Committee

March 19, 2013

The increasing cost of heat and utilities is by far the number one concern of my constituents in my 2013 survey---45% chose it as their priority issue. In recent heating seasons, 402 Wallingford residents required fuel assistance. Statewide, we spend \$75 million per year helping people buy unaffordable heat and putting it in poorly insulated homes. Many of my constituents live in old housing stock. Without an energy audit followed by plenty of insulation and a possible furnace replacement, they face impossibly high energy bills: many are in the \$300-400 per month range over the whole year. These are heating costs for modestly-sized, one family houses.

People who never applied for heating assistance in their lives applied in 2011 and 2012 because their small monthly income could not keep up. My town had to refill their emergency fuel assistance fund twice in 2012 because federal fuel assistance was exhausted and oil prices were still rising. Oil heated homeowners cannot survive in Connecticut, and Connecticut cannot survive economically if we cannot alleviate residential and business dependence on expensive heating oil.

This bill would use a conservation charge on oil similar to the conservation charge on electric customers, and the funds would pay for the critically needed efficiency upgrades following an energy audit. These would be free if the homeowner made less than 60% of the state median household income. Our neighbor to the north, Massachusetts, is heavily committed to energy efficiency for all fuels. The policy has strengthened the Bay State's economy. This is where Connecticut needs to be.

The Program Review and Investigations Committee (PRI) in 2008 prepared the report, *Connecticut's Energy Efficiency and Conservation Programs*. PRI research staff found that:

1. Programs are tied to particular energy types, and most address electricity;
2. Efficiency efforts are fragmented; the short term approach does not offer the stability that vendors and consumers need to make important energy efficiency decisions;
3. The residential loan program is not as widely used as in other states;
4. There is little technical assistance for municipalities;
5. There is little focus on low-income rental and multi-family residences, landlords and other hard to serve customers;
6. There is low use of evaluation of weatherization programs; and
7. The rapid growth in energy prices coupled with little growth in federal funding for fuel assistance means that energy is increasingly unaffordable for low income households in Connecticut.

Most disturbing, the energy affordability gap in Connecticut was ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> greatest among all 50 states. To address this enormous burden, PRI staff recommended fuel blind energy efficiency; a pooled funding stream; and setting per capita energy consumption reduction goals. The state should evaluate the success of these programs and verify them yearly.

In summary, PRI's staff report advocated fuel blind weatherization on a massive scale. The state should set a goal of weatherizing 30% of the state's buildings every 5 years, and achieve 20% reduced energy consumption in these buildings, said the report.

The Commerce Committee may hesitate to add a conservation charge. But the charge provides the mechanism for reaching these goals, thereby lowering homeowner's and renters' energy bills and making oil customers' lives far less stressful. This important investment will make the state's cost of living more affordable and our neighborhoods more sustainable. Massachusetts has shown us it can be done. I hope the committee will endorse a conservation charge for oil so this important work can get underway. Please be aware these families lose access to home energy audits on July 1<sup>st</sup>.